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Bid to defer UP polls triggers EC ire

LGRD order has 'legal flaws', 'incorrect information'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The Election Commission (EC) feels the government initiative to change the union parishad (UP) election schedule without consulting it is unlawful.

They reacted sharply to the government's request to defer the election schedule, official sources said.
In a letter to the EC on Saturday, the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development (LGRD) and Cooperatives requested that the UP election schedule be deferred by two months and the polls be held in March-April.
After months of preparation, the

EC was set to announce the schedule today for elections to be held between January 4 and February 27.
The letter said special law enforcement facilities to hold the election during January-February would be difficult to arrange because of the ongoing anti-crime drive by the joint forces.
The meeting observed that the EC is vested with the responsibility

of holding the election at an "appropriate time" and there is a legal "compulsion" to do it within the timeframe.
"There is no scope for any other authorities to interfere in it," said a source quoting from the discussion at the meeting.
The meeting also observed that the SRO issued by ministry has "legal flaws and information con"
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'Gas export will seriously harm energy security'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
A roundtable yesterday strongly opposed the idea of gas export and suggested that the government concentrate on strengthening the capabilities of Petrobangla and BAPEX instead for better returns from gas resources.
The speakers at the roundtable apprehended that gas export would seriously weaken the country's energy security.
The roundtable titled "Gas Committee Reports: Options for Bangladesh" was organised by the Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILIA) at the

Sonargaon Hotel, with BILIA Director Waliur Rahman in the chair. Professor Rehman Sobhan, chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, stressed the need for shoring up the capability of Petrobangla, helping it generate more revenues to buy more gas.
The projected earning of US\$3.2 billion from gas export is impressive, but it will take 20 years to earn, Professor Sobhan said.
"When the country's yearly export earning is over six billion dollars, the annual income of \$160 million from gas export won't be very healthy."
International oil companies

(IOCs) want to recover their investment as early as possible and will not consider whether the government is in a position to buy it or not, Prof. Sobhan added.
Petrobangla Chairman Syed Sajedul Karim said Petrobangla has no future as a government corporation, terming the present price mechanism unfair. The public sector consumes around 70 per cent and Petrobangla has nothing to do with pricing, he said.
"But if Petrobangla and its subsidiaries are given autonomy, it won't face any problem investing in the gas sector. We have sufficient

Speedy trial law passed amidst AL walkout

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday passed a law for speedy trial of major offences such as murder, rape and possession of firearms or explosives or narcotics, amidst strong protest from the opposition.
The main opposition Awami League, which saw its proposed amendments to the new law rejected outright, staged a walkout minutes before the House approved the Speedy Trial Tribunal Act, 2002.
The AL lawmakers and the Jatiya Party (Ershad) lawmakers earlier voiced strong opposition to the new



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Lowland-filling at full tilt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Defiant real estate developers are filling up all low-lying areas, including natural canals and swamps, around the city.
Many developers have deployed locally-built dredgers and ships in filling up these ecologically important sites at a phenomenal speed.
The government's attempts to implement the act on protection of these areas have miserably failed.

Across the Buriganga under Keraniganj Police Station, a leading real estate developer has bought a fleet of 100 sand-carrying ships and three dredgers and deployed them in filling miles of lowlands. The same plundering continues across the embankment in Mohammadpur.
Experts have time and again warned of an environmental disaster from the filling-up of the flood-flow zones. The filling-up of the zones would result in 'unimaginable disasters' that may wipe out humans along the Buriganga, the Balu and the Turag in case of severe flooding.

Sinister smoke hangs in air

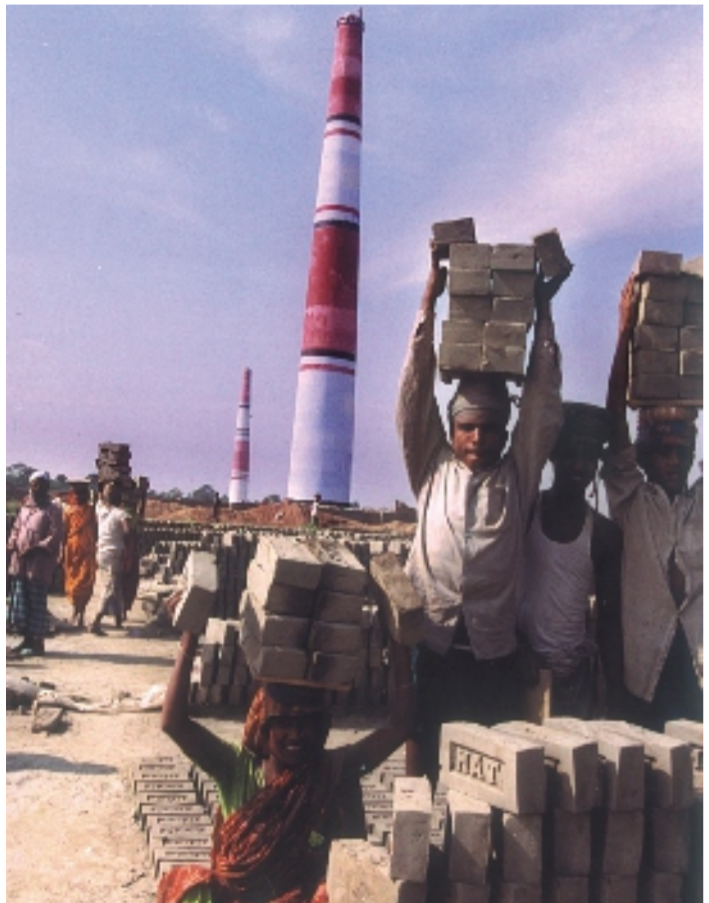


PHOTO: STAR

Workers carry unbaked bricks on their head to feed a kiln at Looterchar in Savar yesterday. Ninety-nine per cent of over 8,000 brick kilns have no filter, spewing toxic sulphur into the air.

Over 8,000 brick kilns back in business

MORSHED ALI KHAN and PINAKI ROY
As winter sets in, city dwellers face another spate of environmental pollution with thousands of brick kilns burning tonnes of highly sulphured coal and fuel wood in a very crude way.
Thick black cloud looms over the city throughout the operational period of these kilns. At places like Doleshwar, Begunbari, Hajariabag and Boktaboli in Keraniganj, where clusters of kilns are operating along the river Buriganga, air remains heavy with toxic sulphur for months.
Inside people's homes, thick layers of dust are always present. The dust settles in water tanks and ponds, rendering those unfit for use until rain comes.
Children and adults are equally vulnerable during the period and complain headache, nausea, asthma and other respiratory problems.
Farmers complain adverse effects on crops grown around the kilns. The smoke pollutes air, water and land with particulate dust and a high concentration of toxic sulphur.
Sources say coal, imported from Meghalaya in India, has a very high sulphur content, hundred times more than the permissible limit.
Leaders of the Brick Kiln Owners

Association said they used to purchase better quality coal in the past, but recently the government 'mysteriously' started to import coal that poses threat to environment and public health.
"Earlier, we imported coal from Raniganj of India, Indonesia or China which was not so damaging to public health. But now the coal we are burning in our kilns is far more harmful with a high concentration of sulphur," said a leader of the association.
Despite adoption of some new measures by the Department of Environment (DoE), thousands of kilns are burning millions of kilograms of coal and fuel wood. The kilns will remain operative until the next rainy season and produce about 1,200 crores of bricks for the country's booming construction sector.
Over 99 per cent of the 8,000
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Buriganga 30 more illegal structures pulled down

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) yesterday demolished 30 illegal structures at Kamrangichar along the foreshore of the river Buriganga.
The team knocked down more than 100 thatched houses. Thousands of local people and onlookers standing on the bank of the river during the drive applauded the BIWTA move to free the river of encroachment.
Equipped with three tugboats and two boats, 150 workers pulled down the structure in presence of
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Govt changes tone on custodial deaths

Media reports termed completely baseless

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Denying any death in army custody once again, the government yesterday alleged that newspaper reports on some recent deaths and harassment of people were baseless.
Newspaper reports accusing army for the death of Masum, Hakim, Tasu Mia and on harassment of some persons in Sylhet are "completely baseless", Principal Information Officer (PIO) Khandker Manirul Alam said while briefing newsmen.
He said Masum died from mass beaten at Narayanganj as he tried to steal motor parts, Hakim from injuries he received during a gunfight with troops and Tashu Mia died as he was knocked down by a pickup van at Nilkhet in the city while escaping

from custody.
In Keraniganj on the outskirts of the city, army personnel recovered a body of a man from the roadside and handed it over to police purely on humanitarian ground, he said.
The PIO categorically said that army was not at all involved in the incidents leading to those deaths and urged newsmen to cross-check with authorities concerned after getting any such information.
On reports in a section of newspapers that the army could be withdrawn before the ensuing Eid, he said the government has not yet taken any such decision.
He said there has not been any slowdown in the joint drive. Arrests have come down as many criminals fled the country.
Quoting the prime minister, the

PIO said army deployment is not a permanent solution. Ultimately, law and order must be controlled by the civil administration.
Asked about arrest of the two identified criminals in Kolkata, he said diplomatic efforts are on for their handover to Bangladesh government. The Indian government has also been requested to arrest other criminals sheltered there.
He said the government is hopeful of getting cooperation from India. Assurance has been received through diplomatic channel that the Indian government would respond "positively" to Bangladesh's request, he added.
Referring to recovery of sophisticated firearms from Chittagong and Cox's Bazar region, the PIO said
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Sk Selim's detention illegal: HC

BSS, Dhaka
The High Court yesterday declared the detention of Awami Jubo League Chairman Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim MP illegal.
A division bench comprising Justice Mohammad Ali Asgar and Justice Mohammad Iman Ali gave the verdict after hearing both sides.
Sheikh Selim was arrested on October 21 under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.
He was detained for 30 days on October 23 under the Special Powers Act, 1974. The detention was later extended by 90 days.

Sehri, Iftar timing			
Ramadan	Nov	Sehri	Iftar
19	25		5-14
20	26	4-57	5-14
21	27	4-58	5-14

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Nov 25		5-11 pm
Nov 26	6-21 am	

Prayer Timings		
Nov 25		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-47	5-07
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-14	5-24
Esha	7-30	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Shrimp trader murdered in Bagerhat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna
A shrimp trader was murdered near his fish farm in Bagerhat sadar upazilla at midnight on Saturday.
The victim was identified as Anwar Hossain Tarafdar, 40, of village Mostafur in Dema union of the upazilla.
According to police and witnesses, a gang of eight armed men stabbed Anwar on the road near his farm and left the place chanting slogan in the name of Purb Banglar Communist Party (PBCP).
Police superintendent of Bagerhat said the murder is a sequel to previous enmity. None was arrested in this connection till filing of this report at 7 pm yesterday.
Akhter Hossain Tarafdar, elder brother of slain fish trader, was also murdered by PBCP armed cadres in July 1999.
Earlier, the killers had demanded till from Anwar Hossain Tarafdar, but he refused to pay, relatives of the slain fish trader said.